



OVERTASKED & OVERRESOURCED

The Flaw in Training Divisions at WFX and CTCs

By: LTC Duane Clark

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DIVISION-LEVEL

training events, including Warfighter Exercises (WFX) and division rotations at the Combat Training Centers (CTC), have unintentionally built bad habits and expectations in how division and corps fights. These lessons, reinforced through repetition across multiple iterations, increasingly diverge from doctrine.

For years, the Mission Command Training Program's (MCTP) WFX has been the premier training event for division headquarters.

Supported by Observers, Controllers, and Trainers (OC/Ts), a Corps Higher Command (HICOM), and a constructive environment, these events are designed to strain the division's systems and staff processes. The OC/T teams consistently provide professional and valuable feedback to commanders and staff.

With the introduction of "dirt" CTC rotations at the division level, division staff not only refine planning and targeting processes, but are also learning how to sustain and survive in unforgiving

environments. These are valuable and necessary repetitions. However, the current design of both WFX and division CTC rotations are teaching the wrong fight.

Division-level training has begun to blur the doctrinal division of labor between divisions and corps. This shift draws divisions away from their primary responsibility: defeating enemy maneuver formations.

Army doctrine states, "During large-scale combat operations, Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) and divisions



generally focus on defeating enemy maneuver formations. Corps and higher echelons generally focus on defeating enemy integrated air defense systems and portions of the enemy's integrated fires command.”[1] Moreover, “when serving under another echelon during multi-corps operations, the corps is a tactical command.”[2] The figure below also identifies enemy rockets, missiles, and air defense as the corps’ responsibility, while the division maintains responsibility for artillery and maneuver formations.

In addition to distinct target sets, the size and distance of the corps and divisions’ respective areas of operation (AO) should be clearly defined. FM 3-0, figure 6-2, clearly defines both division (20-40 km) and corps (30-70 km) AOs, meaning the division AO should be restricted by cannon artillery range. In contrast, the corps AO is defined by extended rocket range. The same graphic defines planning horizons, which are also significantly more substantial for a corps (two to five days) (two to five days)

than for a division (24 to 48 hours). When division focuses efforts too deep, either temporally or physically, it detracts from the staff’s ability to synchronize effects to defeat “enemy maneuver formations.” Reducing the physical size of the division’s AO and adhering to the doctrinal planning ranges will enable synchronized effects across the AOs.

So, if our doctrine clearly outlines the difference between corps and division fights, why do divisions invest

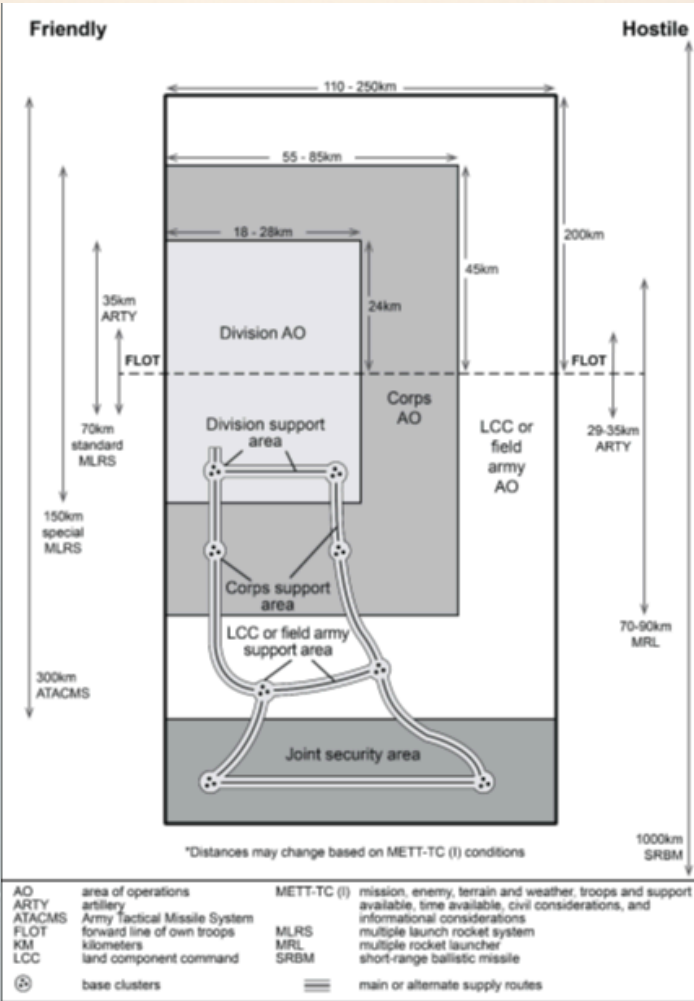


FIGURE 1 - FM 3-0, OPERATIONS [3]

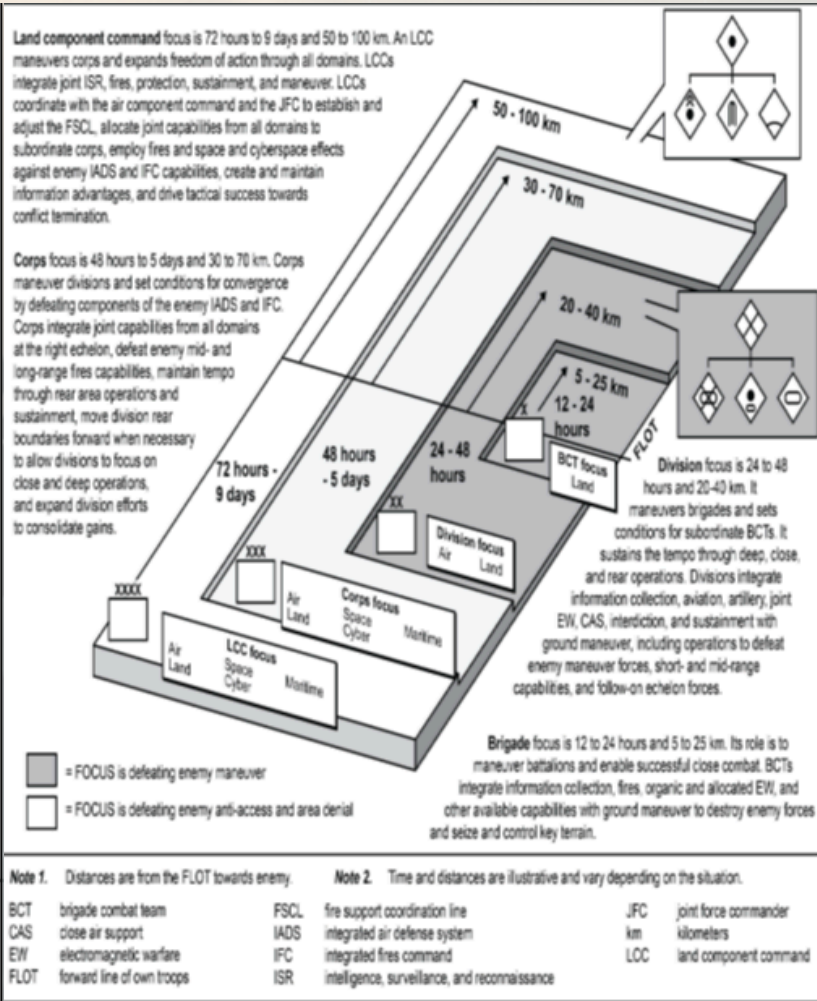


FIGURE 2 - FM 3-0, OPERATIONS [4]

their efforts into finding and destroying air defense and long-range fires at extended ranges? The simple answer is that divisions must get their aviation in the fight. The more complicated answer is that we design our training events this way, and it teaches division commanders and staff that they should be targeting ADA instead of focusing on their actual fight of destroying maneuver and cannon battalions. If we are fighting by doctrine, then the corps must destroy all or nearly all ADA systems in the corps' deep area, including SA-15s, SA-22s, Tier 1,2,3 ADA threats, and nearly all long-range fire systems (defined for this purpose as anything with a greater range than a 2S19).[5]

The destruction of those systems allows divisions to focus their shaping efforts on maneuver formations and short-range fires, which sets the conditions for BCTs to dominate in direct-fire battles. By focusing efforts on high-end enemy air defense capabilities, the maneuver and mobility assets are often left off the High Payoff Target List (HPTL), meaning that BCTs must fight enemy formations at full strength. If the corps destroys air defense, including tactical-level systems, this allows the

division to employ attack aviation and massed cannon fires against enemy fires and maneuver formations. These massed attacks of attack aviation and fires are the only tools divisions can utilize to shape Correlation of Forces and Means (COFMs) and set maneuver conditions for BCTs. Aviation attacks require in-depth planning to deconflict routes, layer effects, mass direct and indirect fires, and conduct SEAD to ensure aircraft survivability. Too often, the staff will treat aviation attacks as an additional requirement, or even worse, as a de facto QRF conducting hasty attacks to mitigate an unshaped enemy formation. This lack of planning effort significantly increases the risk to the force, and in sustained operations beyond the 10-day warfighter/CTC, it would significantly increase the risk to mission and reduce operational reach. If the division staff were freed of burdensome long-range planning and an excessively large AO, the staff would have the ability to fully resource aviation attacks, enabling the destruction of enemy companies and battalions.

To achieve this, the corps must retain and fight assets in-

stead of allocating them to the divisions. During WRF 24--03 and NTC 25-03, IIIAC and V Corps allocated 11D rocket battalions (TACON), PED capability (attached), and collection capability. Instead of allocating these resources to divisions, the corps should retain both lethal and non-lethal capabilities to achieve the effects outlined in FM 3-0 and destroy enemy air defense capability.

An additional reason for the corps to retain capability, especially rocket battalions, is the simple feasibility of attaching two rocket battalions to each division in large-scale combat operations. The current inventory of rocket and long-range capability does not support every division receiving TACON of two rocket battalions. A six-division, two-corps operation would require 18 rocket battalions to provide each division with two battalions and the corps with three. Currently, there are only 11 rocket battalions in the active Army. While future force structure and capability development focus on long-range precision fires, these changes are still years away, and we should be training leaders to fight within current capability constraints.



If divisions were forced to fight with organic cannon artillery as their primary long-range weapon system, they would be compelled to focus on their doctrinal responsibilities.

The planning horizons defined in FM 3-0 also support reducing the division's responsibilities in LSCO. Divisions and corps generally operate their targeting cycle to align with the 96-hour Air Tasking Cycle, meaning the division conducts targeting outside their doctrinal planning horizon.[6] Corps is better postured to prioritize, request, and synchronize assets in the targeting process, with a planning horizon of five days. During WFX and NTC, the division received multiple lines of CAS and AI per day and often planned to use these resources to destroy ADA assets in the division's deep area. These lines of air support were often dynamically re-tasked to achieve effects not originally requested through the targeting process. While this may succeed in a simulated environment, actual effects would be diminished without proper weaponeering. Instead of passing the close air support (CAS) to division, the corps should retain them to

eliminate ADA assets in the deep area, utilizing available time to conduct deliberate weaponeering.

Command posts in LSCO training environments are chaotic; staff are overworked and sleep-deprived, which can lead to task saturation. "Task saturation arises when multiple issues — and/or process requirements — co-occur, diminishing the performance of a group of individuals executing a task." [7] Reducing requirements by better defining fights at the echelon will help commanders and staff process information more rapidly and perform command post functions more effectively. Divisions are responsible for maneuvering brigades and battalions, which require detailed timelines, execution matrices, and graphics — all actions that require large amounts of detailed staff analysis. The smaller and more junior division (compared to the corps) staff can quickly become overwhelmed when attempting to simultaneously fight an in-depth and synchronized close fight and a large division deep fight. Corps maneuver graphics and synchronization matrices can be much less detailed than division-level products, thus

freeing the staff to expend their energy on fighting a truly deep fight. Reducing the requirements of the division will increase their lethality in the close area and allow them to focus on operations for which they are resourced, without desynchronizing corps operations.

These exercises were not designed to be a break from doctrine; the current construct has advantages. First, allowing the division staff and command post to idle for three days out of a 10-day exercise while they wait for corps shaping wastes valuable training time. Secondly, there may be a time and place for the division to fight a corps-deep fight, such as in a non-contiguous or maritime environment. Additionally, some doctrine does state that divisions should be resourced with rocket formations. "To win in large-scale combat operations quickly, decisively and with minimum friendly casualties, each division must be supported with the fires of additional field artillery brigades (FABs), equipped with long range precision fires capability." [8] However, this doctrine conflicts with the current constraints on the availability of long range fires capacity in the Army.



Finally, training in a stressful, overtasked, overresourced environment is complex and represents the staff equivalent of conducting a dismounted infantry platoon live fire and in MOPP4. If the Army continues to train divisions using the current construct, commanders and staff will continue to be challenged; however, we should acknowledge how and why we are deviating from doctrine. Finally, training in a stressful, overtasked, and overresourced

source environment is complex and represents the staff equivalent of conducting a dismounted infantry platoon live fire and in MOPP4. If the Army continues to train divisions using the current construct, commanders and staff will continue to be challenged; however, we should acknowledge how and why we are deviating from doctrine.

IN CONCLUSION,

during WFX and division NTC rotations, the 1st

Infantry Division (1ID) was overtasked and overresourced to conduct operations outside its doctrinal abilities. By reducing the size of the division's AO, its planning horizons, and re-moving additional fire assets, we unburden the division and allow it to focus on its doctrinal responsibilities. Shifting those responsibilities to the corps will create more synchronized effects across the battlefield and lead to an overall increase in lethality at the highest tactical echelons.

END NOTES

1. U.S. Department of the Army, FM 3-0 Operations, (Fort Belvoir, VA: Army Publishing Directorate, 2025), Figure 6-2, 131.
2. U.S. Department of the Army, FM 3-94 Armies, Corps, and Division Operations, (Fort Belvoir, VA: Army Publishing Directorate, 2021), 1-17.
3. U.S. Department of the Army, FM 3-0 Operations, (Fort Belvoir, VA: Army Publishing Directorate, 2025), Figure 6-1, 129.
4. Ibid, 131.
5. TRADOC G2, Worldwide Equipment Guide (<https://odin.tradoc.army.mil/WEG/>), accessed 21 Oct 2025.
6. Avena, Rick, Army Operations and the Air Tasking Order. (https://www.army.mil/article/271997/army_operations_and_the_air_tasking_cycle_atc) date accessed 21 OCT 25.
7. Powers, Dass, Aude, McMahon, Dryzmala, Buehner, Graves, Mitigating Task Saturation for Patriot Engagement Control Station Crews: Research Product Development and Evaluation, (Fort Belvoir, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute for Behavioral and Social Science, 2019), 1.
8. U.S. Department of the Army, FM 3-09 Fire Support and Field Artillery Operations, (Fort Belvoir, VA: Army Publishing Directorate, 2024), 4-4.

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